Implementing the Blue Card Training Program at South Metro (CO) Fire Rescue Authority

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed:_____

James Michael West

Abstract

The problem was that the South Metro Fire Rescue Authority had made plans to adopt the Blue Card Command Certification Program in 2013, yet had not yet determined the steps required to implement the program. The purpose of this study was to determine what issues on the fireground currently exist so that they can be addressed with the upcoming Blue Card training. Further the study will determine the required steps to execution as well as look at barriers to implementation so that issues can be avoided. To achieve this, four questions were answered: what impact do inconsistencies in command styles and terminology have on SMFRA incidents currently, what changes to operational guidelines at SMFRA would be required by adopting the Blue Card program, what potential barriers exist in implementing the Blue Card program at SMFRA, and what implementation steps would be required by adopting the Blue Card program?

Data was collected via three questionnaires, and a number of interviews were held with users of the program as well as the Blue Card program's authors. One questionnaire was distributed to South Metro's mutual aid partners to evaluate current issues and trends on the fireground. A second was distributed to members of South Metro who were part of a focus group who had decided to adopt the Blue Card program. The third questionnaire was given to departments who had already adopted the program to evaluate their experience. A literature review was conducted to form the basis for the questionnaires. The research method chosen was action.

Results of the research yielded seven broad recommendations toward implementation and indicated that adopting the program would have greater success if done with automatic aid partners and when done so with regionalized Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

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Introduction

Throughout its existence, command training at South Metro Fire Rescue Authority (SMFRA) and the agencies that make up the authority has been inconsistent. These inconsistencies manifest themselves on the fireground by causing communications errors, accountability gaps, and reduced operational effectiveness. These issues are further exacerbated when mutual or automatic aid fire departments respond with SMFRA bringing additional inconsistent terminology and command procedures germane to their departments. Recently an effort has been made to increase consistency among the chief officers at SMFRA and one initiative toward this end has been to adopt a plan to use the Blue Card Command Training Program (Blue Card).

Beginning in 2011, South Metro and other area departments began sending a focus group of battalion chiefs and training officers through the Blue Card program. The program is based entirely on retired Phoenix Fire Chief Alan Brunacini's *Fire Command* (2002) and *Command Safety* (2004) textbooks. The Blue Card Incident Commander Training and Certification Program is designed to manage local, NIMS Type 4 and 5 incidents. The program requires the student to participate in 50 hours of self paced online classes followed by 24 hours of simulation based training (www.bshifter.com).

As a result of this focus group, South Metro has set out to certify all officers and chiefs in the program with the goal of doing so in 2013. This will require that approximately 100 members receive this training. The problem was that the department had not thoroughly considered how to implement the program. The purpose of this research will be to determine the implementation steps and identify potential pitfalls in the program so they can be avoided and the

implementation at South Metro can be done so smoothly. The research method will be action with the intention of answering the following four questions: what impacts do inconsistencies in command styles and terminology have on SMFRA incidents currently, what changes to operational guidelines at SMFRA would be required by adopting the Blue Card program, what potential barriers exist in implementing the Blue Card program at SMFRA, and what implementations steps would be required by adopting the Blue Card program?

Background and Significance

The South Metro Fire Rescue Authority (SMFRA) was formed in 2008 as an amalgamation of the South Metro Fire Rescue District and the Parker Fire Protection District. SMFRA protects 176 square miles and a population of about 200,000 residents within portions of Arapahoe and Douglas Counties in Colorado. The district is made up of sections of urban, suburban, and rural neighborhoods, and within the boundaries are several significant target hazards. South Metro is an accredited fire department by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. SMFRA has responded to an average of just over 15,000 incidents per year since its inception, and total incident numbers are trending upwards (South Metro Fire Rescue Authority website, 2013).

Coverage of this district is provided from 17 fire stations and 284 uniformed personnel. The response district is divided into three battalions each commanded by a Battalion Chief (BC). Each Battalion contains 5-6 fire stations. Within the stations 12 engine companies are staffed with a minimum of 3 members, 1 ALS engine is staffed with 4 personnel, and 4 truck companies are staffed with a minimum of 4 personnel. Additionally 9 Advanced Life Support (ALS) medic

units are staffed with 2 firefighters. (South Metro Fire Rescue Authority website, 2013). A captain or lieutenant is assigned to each suppression company, and the captains are designated as the station commander and provide management of various projects and initiatives in addition to their role as company officer. Incidents that meet the definition of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as being Type 4 in complexity ("Incident complexity," n.d.) are commanded by one of the on-duty battalion chiefs in most cases. Several area and regional Type 3 teams exist for those incidents requiring one by virtue of complexity or their expected duration.

A system of automatic and mutual aid exists and the department routinely shares resources with 11 other fire departments. These agencies are the Denver Fire Department, Aurora Fire Department, Cunningham Fire Protection District, Rattlesnake Fire Protection District, Elizabeth Fire Protection District, Franktown Fire Protection District, Castle Rock Fire and Rescue Department, West Douglas Fire Protection District, West Metro Fire Rescue, Littleton Fire Rescue, and Englewood Fire Department. Of the 17,015 incidents that South Metro responded to in 2012, 3,162 occurred in one of these jurisdictions. Aid was received from one of these agencies in South Metro's district 1403 times in 2012 (South Metro Fire Rescue Authority, 2012).

Over the years the interagency cooperation between the surrounding agencies has been considered good. Of late, though, some issues and concerns have arisen. As the area has changed in demographics, some agencies have remained mostly volunteer while others have become more combination in nature with some career and some volunteer staff. Still other departments work on different shift schedules. These changes have strained some relationships between officers since often members on scene lack familiarity with the other agency's personnel. This coupled with varying SOGs and tactical procedures can often create a tense fireground before the

call even occurs. Arguments and heated discussions have occurred at post fire critiques and occasionally at incidents. . A variety of meetings have been needed to resolve various conflicts. While some discussions and meetings have been productive in talking out the various differences, most have not yielded plans or steps to remedy arguments.

During the last 4 years the number of significant incidents such as working fires has remained steady in the district. A factor that has also played a role in difficulties in incident command has been an increase in the number of personnel and apparatus sent to incidents initially. In the early 2000s South Metro Fire Rescue sent 3 engines, 1 truck, 1 medic unit ,1 BC, 1 EMS Supervisor, and 1 safety officer, for a total minimum staff of 17 to a working fire in a commercial building. Today the same fire gets a response of 4 engines, 2 trucks, 2 medic units, 1 cross-staffed rescue company, 2 battalion chiefs, and a safety officer for a minimum of 31 personnel. Undoubtedly the increase of available members and apparatus allows the incident commander more options on the fireground and has demonstrably made the department more effective at emergency scenes. The increase however and the rapidity at which these resources arrive has left many incident commanders overwhelmed in the initial stages of an incident, and this author has noted accountability gaps in the initial stages of an incident that cause safety concerns. At a significant incident in 2011 involving SMFRA and several mutual aid departments, gaps in accountability and communication were identified as causal factors in a near miss situation (Metropolitan Area Communications Center [Metcom], 2011).

Regionally, incident command training has focused on the Type 3 and larger incidents. Certainly the Colorado fire service is well trained and adept at handling large scale disasters such as wildland urban interface (WUI) fires. However, the lack of regionalized standardization of the application of the incident command system for local incidents is evident.

Initial command officer and company officer training at South Metro is well developed. Eligible firefighters who wish to become lieutenants for example attend an in-house lieutenant academy. Upon successful completion they begin a task book that is completed under the guidance of a promoted officer. Generally it takes about 1 year to complete the task book. Once completed firefighters take an exam to certify them as qualified, and then they are given an opportunity to act out of grade when an officer is sick or on vacation. Only those who are qualified can take the promotional exams. Once qualified they remain so for four years at which time they need to either pass a promotional exam or attend the lieutenant academy again as a refresher class (South Metro Fire Rescue Authority [SMFRA], 2011). This same process exists for all ranks above firefighter. While this robust system has provided a significant increase in competence over the last two decades, since its inception the command and control inconsistencies mentioned earlier arise after promotion as continuing education has not often been mandated.

In 2011, South Metro held a one day introduction class on the Blue Card concepts instructed by Alan Brunacini, retired Chief of the Phoenix Fire Department. Soon thereafter a focus group was formed to evaluate the Blue Card curriculum as a method gaining consistency in day to day incidents at South Metro. A number of other area fire departments also began similar evaluations. Some efforts were made at evaluating the possibility of building a similar curriculum “in-house” but ultimately the focus group voted to move ahead with implementing the Blue Card in 2013. The successful implementation of the Blue Card curriculum at South Metro and potentially with its neighbors will aid in meeting the United States Fire Administration’s strategic goals by “improving the fire and emergency services’ capability for response to and recovery from all hazards” (United States Fire Administration [USFA], 2010, p.

13). To date, though, the department has not followed a logical change management model in deciding to implement the program. Such a model is part of the National Fire Academy (NFA) Executive Fire Officer Program's (EFOP) Executive Development course. The Bridges Change Model claims that successful transitions require that resources are devoted to the transition, a plan is in place, and there is a team assembled to oversee the process. (*Executive Development*, 2011, p. 5-10)

Literature review

A literature review was conducted to reveal current trends related to the use of the Blue Card program and to establish some foundation related to command training, standard operating guidelines (SOGs), and interoperability. Several noted fire service leaders were interviewed. One difficulty was that the Blue Card System is fairly new and as such only a few detailed studies regarding implementation were available.

Regarding implementation a study comparing current methods of command deployment to the Blue Card program was conducted by the Fire and Rescue Service of New South Wales Australia (FRNSW). Overwhelmingly their study found that "the Blue Card system will greatly assist us in providing a safer workplace and raise our level of professionalism" (Ferrante, 2011, p. 10). As a result of their initial investigation, they conducted a second focus group and have since started to implement the entire program with plans to deliver the training to over 1000 officers over 5-10 years. According to Ferrante, their first significant implementation step was to create SOGs that match the program as well as to create checklists (command worksheets) that will assist their commanders (N. Ferrante, personal communication, January 13, 2013).

Blum (2011) also concluded that the Blue Card program met the needs of a training consortium in Ohio made up of departments comprised of over 400 members. While his study concentrated on initial fireground size up rather than incident command he concluded, “this standardized approach of size up and communications also will assist with best practice hazard zone management” (Blum, 2011, p. 27). What is significant about Blum’s work is that his training consortium was looking to increase cooperation and consistency.

The concept of using SOGs or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to create consistency is not new to the fire service. Cook (1998) says, “written SOPs make a department more professional. They eliminate the game of trying to guess what will happen next. Having written procedures helps reduce freelancing by individual members. Written SOPs also make your department more cohesive” (p. 3). The topic continues today. According to John Brunacini (2012), “when we operate within our SOP’s, we can effectively manage the incident while we protect our members operating inside of a hazard zone” (Brunacini, 2012, p. 2).

Important on the topic of SOGs is the concept that officers should know not only how to follow them but also, when the situation dictates, how to adapt. John Norman (2005)points out,

> A good standard operating procedure should handle the majority of the incidents in which a unit is involved. When faced with a nonstandard situation, however, you must be flexible enough to adapt and develop a proper solution. Don’t try to force an SOP to handle a situation for which it wasn’t designed. Doing so creates problems (p. 6).

While knowing when to adapt and overcome is important, Alan and Nick Brunacini (2004) also advise us that “no one is empowered to break a safety rule.” They go on to affirm

that, “creativity does not apply to safety rules” (p. 15). Obviously helping officers understand the difference is vital and must be included in any instructional process that is SOP based.

While much of the available literature focused on SOPs, one of the important hallmarks of this training is the fireground simulations that all members must go through. The Command Training Center (CTC) is considered the backbone of this simulation portion of the class. An example of the CTC’s use and design can be found in Brevard County, Florida. The fire department there consists of 31 stations and is one of the only metro departments in the United States to certify all of their officers in the Blue Card. The CTC at Brevard County consists of “the CTC classroom, the control room and dispatch center, the Strategic IC command response vehicle, company level officer positions (computer kiosks), and the mobile command unit” (Collins, 2012, p. 22).

The City of Phoenix also operates a state of the art CTC and built one of the first such centers in the United States. Their Command Training Center consists of the same components as Brevard and also adds an actual dispatching console, located in a side room that allows a 911 fire dispatcher to “dispatch” the incidents. This provides experience for the dispatcher and allows instructors to track the communications that can be used later in the critiques (Command training center, n.d.).

Phoenix built their CTC after they suffered a line of duty death in 2001. “The goal was to train mid-level managers to manage the big crises that come so infrequently in cities like Phoenix, but can be catastrophic when they do. The CTC used multiple video screens to simulate fires, and commanders got experience making important judgment calls” (Fenske, 2007, p. 4).

The Houston Fire Department also has an extensive simulation based training center. While they have developed their own course and do not use the Blue Card curriculum, their program has a

number of valuable principles that are applicable to the implementation at South Metro. One important principle is that Houston was concerned with the perception that students would be negatively critiqued by instructors and peers. They adopted what they referred to as a Las Vegas style approach "and adopted the motto 'What happens here, stays here'." Further they do not allow the program to be used as punishment. "This is extremely important to emphasize when starting simulation training. Such training must gain members' acceptance as a learning tool to be effective," according to Brian Kimberly of Houston's Professional Development Division (Kimberley, 2010, p. 3).

Jason Hoevelmann points out that older members of the fire service may be reluctant to embrace simulation training. Considering the tenure of many of South Metro's personnel, Hoevelmann's observations may have strong worth. He says,

> Not all firefighters are going to be excited about using technology for training. In many cases, the older demographic can be resistive to such changes. If you encounter this, remember that the resistance is not to the training but to the technology itself. (Hoevelmann, 2012, p. 2).

The literature review offered many key themes which the author reflected in the research. Among these themes were needs to plan carefully and implement slowly where possible. Also, the importance of SOP's and documentation of the guidelines to allow for a clear connection from the fireground to the simulations and back to the fireground was expressed. A theme that also emerged was that department culture and leadership may have important impacts on the implementation of the program.

Procedures

The approach used to evaluate the implementation steps of Blue Card was consistent with the action research methodology. Beginning with a search for related literature at the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy, online sources, and other sources helped determine issues and concerns that other agencies faced and determine if anyone had done formal research on the implementation of Blue Card. The author also reviewed other simulation and online training program implementation documents for overarching concepts that will also apply to the Blue Card implementation at South Metro.

This literature review helped form the basis for several questionnaires developed by the author. Using the survey monkey tool, the questionnaires were developed to gain deeper understanding of the perspectives of external users of the system, internal members who were part of the trial group, and external stakeholders from mutual aid departments.

The first questionnaire (Appendix B) was sent to departments who provide mutual aid to South Metro to gather a feel for fireground issues and interoperability concerns when they worked with SMFRA. Recipients of the survey were training officers from the agencies surrounding South Metro. These officers were asked to distribute the instrument to their officers and members who frequently responded with South Metro.

The second questionnaire (Appendix C) was sent to members of South Metro's focus group regarding their reactions to the training they received. South Metro's focus group was made up of the majority of the operational bureau and battalion chiefs as well as training officers. Each volunteered to go through the Blue Card program in its entirety to determine if it would be applicable to SMFRA. Help was also solicited from a few company and acting

company officers who had enrolled in the Blue Card on their own. The questionnaire asked about impacts of the training as well as the positives and negatives they saw regarding implementation. Of the 21 members from South Metro who completed the program through the focus group, 18 completed the questionnaire.

The last questionnaire (Appendix D) was sent to agencies that were currently using the Blue Card certification around the country. Recipients of the questionnaire had been identified through TradeNet and International Association of Fire Chief Internet posts as well as from lists received from the Blue Card program's developer.

Several users of the blue card system as well as the developers of the system were interviewed regarding their implementation recommendations. Specifically, Nick and John Brunacini, two of the program's developers were interviewed about their thoughts on implementation issues and the best ways to handle them. The course developers also provided a written document reflecting their recommend SOPs matching the Blue Card syllabus. This paper's author conducted a comparison with the provided SOP to South Metro's current guidelines.

There were limitations to these procedures as first the number of users of the system is relatively small among the fire service currently. Further the majority of the departments in the United States who have implemented the course were much smaller in size and scope than South Metro and its mutual aid departments, and some of the input was thus skewed toward smaller agencies. Additionally, the author was unable to identify any agencies that had failed to successfully implement the program after starting. This information may have yielded additional strategies that might cause further investigation into the program.

Results

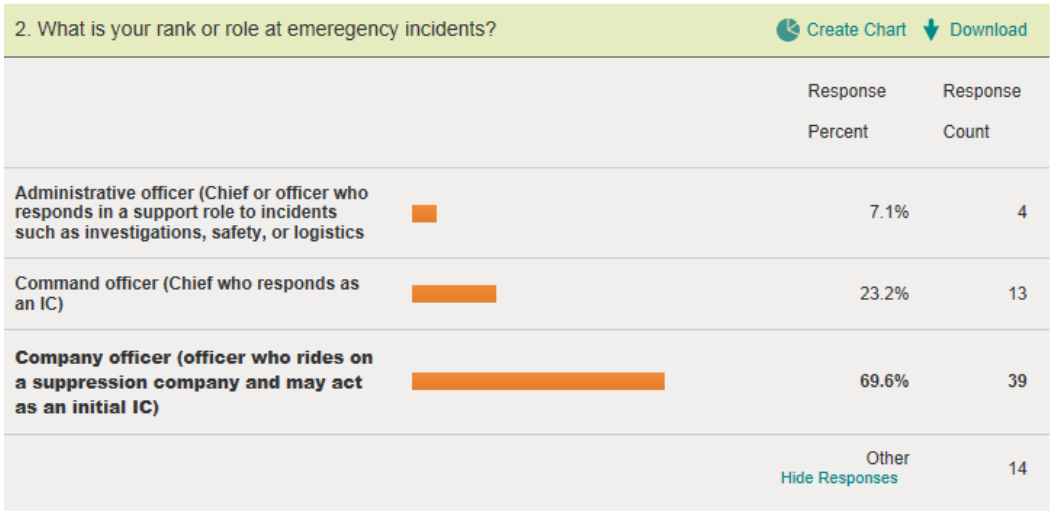
The 4 research questions specifically answered in this project were as follows: what impact do inconsistencies in command styles and terminology have on SMFRA incidents currently, what changes to operational SOGs at SMFRA would be required by adopting the Blue Card program, what potential barriers exist in implementing the Blue Card program at SMFRA, and what implementations steps would be required by adopting the Blue Card program?

The impact of inconsistencies in command styles and terminology had been anecdotally discussed on many levels internally at South Metro as well as with conversations among our mutual aid partners. While the decision to move ahead with the Blue Card program has already been made, this question and topic is important to fully understand once implementation is started and throughout the communication process while classes are being taught. While all members at SMFRA have participated in ICS training to meet their job descriptions and each person gets thorough initial training for their rank as mentioned earlier, a lack of ongoing simulations and realistic scenario-based training has led to these differences in style.

The questionnaire to mutual aid departments was developed to provide information regarding the inconsistencies that others witnessed when responding with South Metro. Since such a significant number of SMFRA's incidents fall within other departments' jurisdictions or required assistance in South Metro's district, officers and chiefs from neighboring departments likely had been exposed to issues related to these differences. As Kimberley discusses, "reach out to your neighbors in the fire service for their feedback to make your department better and improve service to your community (Kimberley, 2010, p. 5). This questionnaire was sent to 10 of the 11 surrounding departments. Denver Fire Department was not included as nearly all

automatic aid between the two agencies is related to medical calls and not incidents where battalion chiefs respond or formal command is established. A total of 56 members responded to the survey. No responses were received from members of the Rattlesnake Fire Protection District.

Of these members, all but one identified themselves as career firefighters and the majority responded that they were company officers who acted as the role of initial incident commander. 14 non-officers also responded and many indicated that they acted in the role of company officer. Regarding training in incident command, the respondents indicated a high level of NIMS training. In fact, over 60% stated they had ICS 400. This level of training corresponds to the job requirement of a battalion chief at South Metro. 91% indicated that they had not been through the Blue Card program.

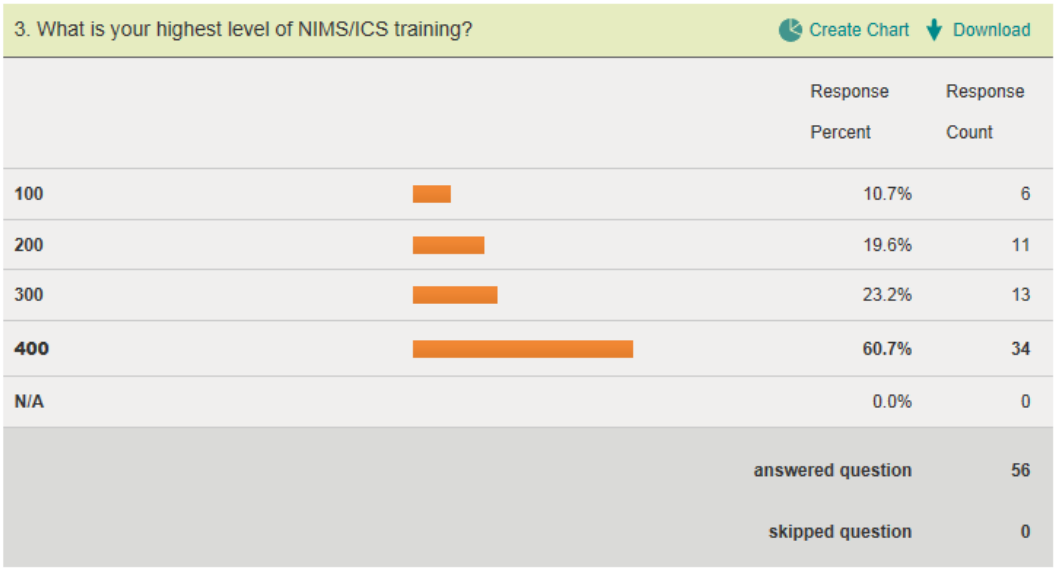


2. What is your rank or role at emeregency incidents?

Create Chart Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Administrative officer (Chief or officer who responds in a support role to incidents such as investigations, safety, or logistics	7.1%	4
Command officer (Chief who responds as an IC)	23.2%	13
Company officer (officer who rides on a suppression company and may act as an initial IC)	**69.6%**	**39**
Other		14

Hide Responses



3. What is your highest level of NIMS/ICS training?

Create Chart Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
100	10.7%	6
200	19.6%	11
300	23.2%	13
400	60.7%	34
N/A	0.0%	0
answered question		56
skipped question		0

4. Have you been through the Blue Card command training program?

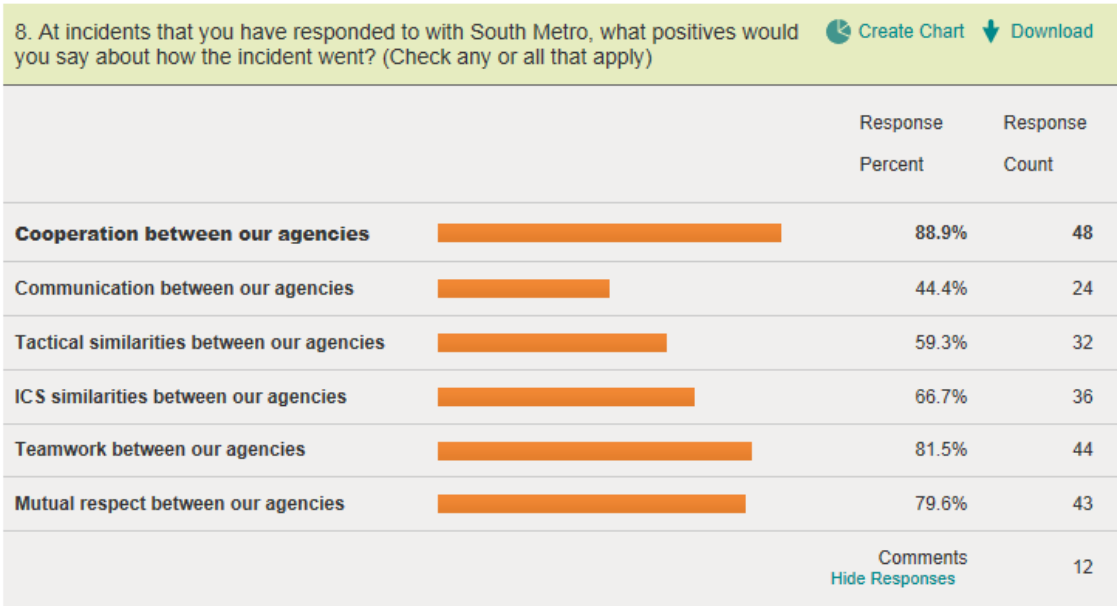
Create Chart Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	8.9%	5
No	91.1%	51

A number of background questions regarding the respondents' personal experience were asked and led to questions about interaction between their agency and SMFRA. When asked to describe the positives about how incidents went, the respondents indicated high amounts of cooperation (89%), teamwork (82%), and mutual respect (80%). A few also provided comments and those comments included:

> There are some "terminology" differences between our agencies, but none that pose a "safety" issue. Some communications issues were identified. Communication has improved. Face to face communications were fine. Respect & cooperation though tactics, verbiage, and their use of ICS seems to be different/incongruent. The Cooperation, Communications, Tactical Similarities, Teamwork, and Mutual Respect have been

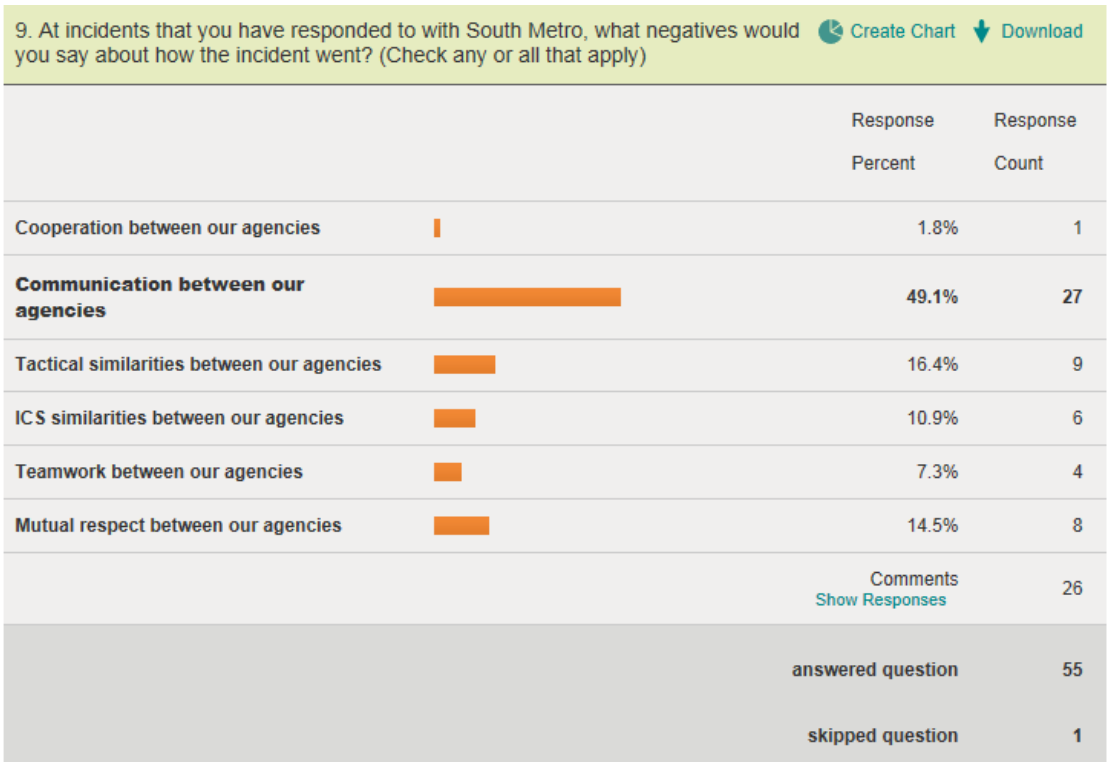
developed over the last 5 years. The multi-company drills and improved auto aid agreements have helped in this matter. Our agencies train and work well together. We have similar SOPs and objective thought processes that enable us to achieve the final product. How positive the calls have been are related directly to personnel on scene (Survey Monkey, 2012).



8. At incidents that you have responded to with South Metro, what positives would you say about how the incident went? (Check any or all that apply)

Create Chart Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Cooperation between our agencies	**88.9%**	**48**
Communication between our agencies	44.4%	24
Tactical similarities between our agencies	59.3%	32
ICS similarities between our agencies	66.7%	36
Teamwork between our agencies	81.5%	44
Mutual respect between our agencies	79.6%	43
	Comments Hide Responses	12



9. At incidents that you have responded to with South Metro, what negatives would you say about how the incident went? (Check any or all that apply)

Create Chart Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Cooperation between our agencies	1.8%	1
Communication between our agencies	**49.1%**	**27**
Tactical similarities between our agencies	16.4%	9
ICS similarities between our agencies	10.9%	6
Teamwork between our agencies	7.3%	4
Mutual respect between our agencies	14.5%	8
	Comments Show Responses	26
	answered question	**55**
	skipped question	**1**

Significant to the question regarding negatives on incidents is that nearly one half stated that communications between the two agencies were an issue. It was also reflected in the comments about on scene positives and in some of the comments from this question that included:

> Career vs. volunteer. AFD TAC3 was utilized prior to this year. Red SE has been used since and although adequate the potential for operational problems exist and are concerning. Communication issues due to the Aurora radio system. Based on technology, not face to face communication. Radio communications is the only real issue I encountered that was negative. My opinion is that SMFR lacks the discipline to allow its officers to make unilateral evolving decisions (everyone has a place). Too much radio traffic by Command Officers. We have very different arrival responsibilities which have caused some issues. One fire was the most dangerous command and control fire I have

> ever been on. I feel this was solely based on the auto-aid unit following their SOP's with an IC from the other agency. The mutual respect with crews that don't work with us on a regular basis is not always evident in the beginning, but is developed in a short amount of time. The wonderful thing about understanding our weaknesses is that we work together to resolve them...communication is not necessarily a negative but certainly the weakest link in our mutual chain. Certain terminology is not common, such as "recycle" etc. The only thing that makes communication difficult sometimes is separate dispatch channels and lots moving of radio channels. Improving communications is always good (Survey Monkey, 2012).

While some of the comments were related to technology, clearly there were operational issues that were exacerbated by the technology concerns. Notable within this framework is the fact that most respondents indicated that they had similar levels of NIMS training to South Metro's command officers, yet terminology and the implementation of the incident command system seems to be different from department to department in comparison to South Metro. It appeared obvious to the author that there was a high level of frustration in these differences even though the same respondents indicated a significant amount of cooperative feelings when asked about positives on the fireground.

The questionnaire posed to the internal focus group at South Metro was given to 21 members, 20 of whom replied. 60% were from battalion chiefs. 85% had greater than 20 years of experience.

1. My rank is — Create Chart | Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Battalion Chief or above	**60.0%**	**12**
Captain	15.0%	3
Lieutenant	20.0%	4
Acting Lieutenant	5.0%	1
	answered question	**20**

2. I have been in the fire service for _____years — Create Chart | Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 10	0.0%	0
10-14	10.0%	2
15-19	5.0%	1
20-29	40.0%	8
30 or more	**45.0%**	**9**
	answered question	**20**
	skipped question	**0**

Each of the focus group members was asked about his fireground experience following their completion of the Blue Card program as well as areas that South Metro will need to address during implementation. They were also asked a number of open ended questions. One such question was “what would the Blue Card fix for South Metro? The comments provided were:

> Consistency, efficiency, and safety...three pretty big benefits. Standardization of command tactics and terminology. Expectations of command from crews would be enhanced. Consistent command structure, language on the fire ground and training. By starting everyone over on the same page consistency will prevail on calls and the longer it

is in use the more second nature it will become. Blue Card would put everyone on the same page. It would allow the BC's to talk a talk that everyone knows and understands. Most command officers and a lot of officers have not been through any formal training for many years. This program would be a great way to get them back into the game. Adopting the program will strengthen our already strong SOGs and make the fire ground safer by teaching us clear, concise communications. It gets ALL the leaders on the same page. This is a standardized approach that all can learn from. It would help with consistency thus safety. Accountability/Safety. Organization. Control/Eliminate Free-lancing. Positive Outcome through Command and Control. Blue Card provides a standard methodology of addressing an incident from the first arriving unit to the conclusion of the incident. It provides that practical piece of methodology (from ICS) that I feel has been missing for the type 5 and 4 incidents that we deal with each day. It would streamline communications and put everyone on the same page on calls. Good solid program that is already developed. Common terminology and expectations. Make first due operations smoother. Standardize practices. Consistent command. The biggest thing would be consistency amongst the BCs and company officers with terminology and initial operations, The fast attacking initial IC and a simple transition to formal IC. Opens the door to BC aides which are needed to start the process for proper accountability and transfer of command. Establish SMFRA communication model; provide one model for on scene organization and uniform expectation of each other (especially the first due officer and the first arriving BC. Narrow the range of IC actions on scene to an acceptable level. Make all SMFRA fire ground operations a safer. Better communication on scene. More consistency. More safe scenes (Survey Monkey, 2012).

It was apparent from the focus group that many of the concerns regarding inconsistencies in ICS and communications that were noted by mutual aid departments would likely be solved once South Metro began full implementation of the Blue Card curriculum. While this sentiment was also noted by departments who have adopted the program, it is important to realize that the consistency gained will be internal to South Metro without any concerted efforts to open all or portions of the training to mutual aid departments.

The research regarding changes to operational SOGs at South Metro is noteworthy in several ways as SMFRA currently operates under a well-developed set of guidelines. In the past these SOGs have formed the basis for much of the department's ongoing training as well as promotional testing. Undoubtedly an adoption of a new training curriculum must include appropriate updates to the guidelines to support the course as well as avoid contradictions or further inconsistencies downstream.

For example, three members of the South Metro focus group expressed concern that some of the online class tactics did not match South Metro's tactics and could lead to some confusion. Those who cited this issue claimed they did not feel it was insurmountable but needed clarification as the members progressed through the program. Ferrante indicated that the SOGs must be the first steps in implementation (Ferrante, 2011). The Blue Card authors have produced a 100 page document with their recommendations for procedures that match and mirror the curriculum. Within the framework are the terms that go with the learning objectives (Brunacini, 2012). While the document is sizable, many of the current SOPs were found to reflect many of the overarching concepts although there were many new terms.

The third question within this research was to determine potential barriers to implementation. Ultimately South Metro will have spent a great deal of time and energy in

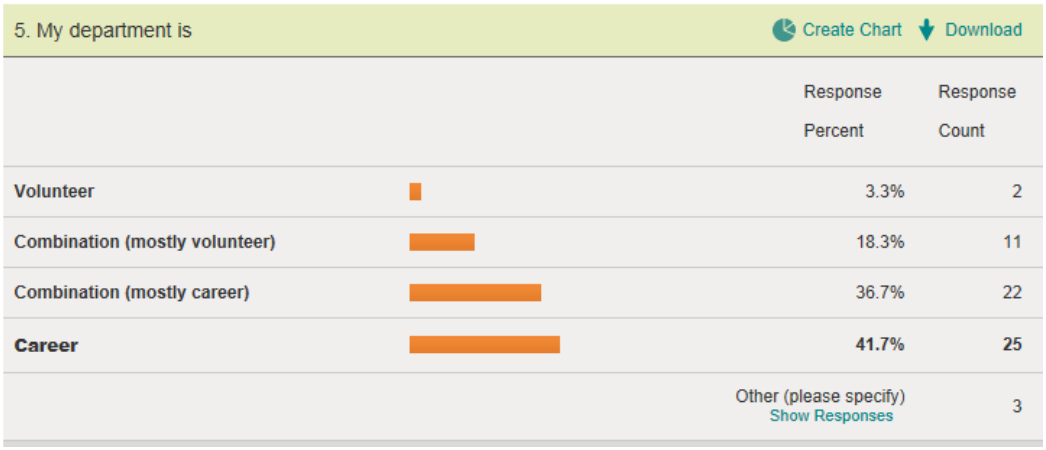
implementing Blue Card. Understanding limitations and problems ahead of time will save time and money in this regard. Looking at agencies that have implemented the program and their issues will help SMFRA avoid many of the common problems they have discovered. Questionnaire 3 was sent to departments whom the author had identified as having implemented the Blue Card curriculum. 60 people responded and the majority indicated that they were from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Colorado. It's important to note that a significant number of departments in northern Colorado have adopted the program over the last 3 years. Of the respondents, nearly 80% were from departments who served less than 100,000 residents and with less than 9 stations. 42 % indicated that they were in all career departments.

2. What is the population your department serves? Create Chart Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 25,000	30.0%	18
25,000-50,000	26.7%	16
50,000-100,000	21.7%	13
100,000-250,000	8.3%	5
250,000-500,000	8.3%	5
Greater than 500,000	5.0%	3

4. How many fire stations are in your department? Create Chart Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
1-4	60.0%	36
5-9	25.0%	15
10-14	0.0%	0
15-19	5.0%	3
20-29	3.3%	2
Greater than 30	6.7%	4



5. My department is — Create Chart — Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Volunteer	3.3%	2
Combination (mostly volunteer)	18.3%	11
Combination (mostly career)	36.7%	22
Career	**41.7%**	**25**
Other (please specify) Show Responses		3

The vast majority (71%) of the departments who responded indicated that they had implemented the program already while 25% were still in the trial stage. A number of comments were received regarding the implementation and included:

> The last officer is just now completing the on-line program and will visit the simulator in Sept/Oct. After that, we intend to fully integrate the program into department operations.
>
> This program is being evaluated throughout the North Zone Area of San Diego County. It is inevitable that we will use this resource as a training component for new company officers and we are currently adjusting our operating guidelines to match. We are also using on EMS calls for setting up command. Will adopt in full 2013. Working on SOG's. I don't think you can half way adopt blue card. Have not revised the components for our system and staffing levels. This program is a great training program. We tried to build an incident command program similar to this for our department 5 years ago and found the project was too large to accomplish development of a quality program. With local modifications to meet mutual aid region and regional dispatch ops, we have "White Riverised" it. We have made little changes which allowed it to flow better in our system. Few pieces did not fit (Survey Monkey, 2012).

11. Would you say your department has — Create Chart — Download

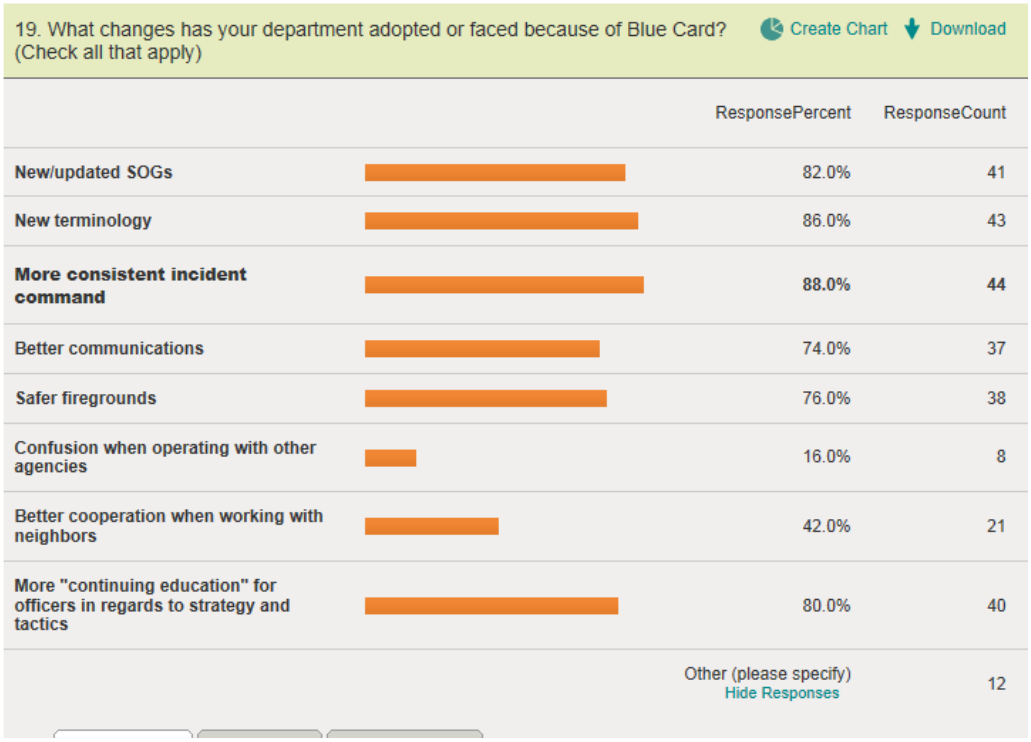
	Response Percent	Response Count
Adopted the program in full	**42.4%**	**25**
Adopted the program in part	28.8%	17
is still in the trial stage	25.4%	15
has tried it and decided not to pursue it	3.4%	2
Comments Show Responses		12

Only 20% of the respondents indicated that they had been using the program for more than 2 years and another 34% indicated that they had been using the program for 1-2 years.

13. How long has your department been using Blue Card? — Create Chart — Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 6 months	24.0%	12
6 months to one year	22.0%	11
1-2 years	**34.0%**	**17**
Greater than 2 years	20.0%	10
Comments Show Responses		5

The Blue Card departments were asked about changes as a result of implementation to their department. While the vast majority reported positive results, some reported more confusion when operating with their mutual aid agencies and less than half experienced better cooperation.



19. What changes has your department adopted or faced because of Blue Card? (Check all that apply)

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
New/updated SOGs	82.0%	41
New terminology	86.0%	43
More consistent incident command	**88.0%**	**44**
Better communications	74.0%	37
Safer firegrounds	76.0%	38
Confusion when operating with other agencies	16.0%	8
Better cooperation when working with neighbors	42.0%	21
More "continuing education" for officers in regards to strategy and tactics	80.0%	40
Other (please specify) Hide Responses		12

The last question was what implementation steps would be required by adopting the Blue Card program? In the interest of action research this final question is the culmination of the others. The goal is to provide a roadmap of sorts in moving from the already made decision to adopt the program into a working plan of how do to so.

Each of the departments in questionnaire number 3 was asked what advice they would give to a department beginning implementation. This open ended question revealed a significant number of comments and because of this the author has divided them into several categories to allow for easier interpretation.

The first area is leadership and how the program should be implemented. It is noteworthy that the number of comments related to this was the highest in number and included:

Have the senior staff go through the program and embrace it. It works top down....The company officers look to Chief's to lead and this is an opportunity to lead them with an operational based

training program. Consider training all officer staff at the same time. Implementation needs to start at the top with the Chief Officers. The Battalion Chiefs must all be on the same page before rolling this out to the troops. The biggest thing we had to work on was buy in from the Fire Chief. Once he was convinced it gets easier. Have your "go-getter" folks go through the program, evaluate it and I think you will adopt the program. I would wholeheartedly recommend adopting this system. It is the first system that I have used that is simple, easy to use, and easy to learn. Get buy in from our officers. Also, I recommend that those that are ICs on the street also be those that teach the program to your members. It makes it much easier if the members see that those that are the everyday ICs see the value in the program. We implemented it in a top down fashion where the training division was responsible for the training in its entirety. I would not recommend that. It led to some distrust and skepticism from the members. We made one mistake in implementing the program. We used some surplus training funds left over at the end of a budget year to put 61 members into the on-line program. We should have trained the three Blue Card Trainers first. Then they would have trained the command staff and modified the program. Then the company officers and acting officers would be trained. I firmly believe that the blue card program will enhance the situational awareness of the organization; thereby, enhancing safety. Have the command or senior staff do it first so you can find the landmines then adapt your current practices to the system rather than throw out the old system (which probably worked to some degree). Jump into the online full force - don't drag it out. 5 of our 6 chiefs did it in under 3 months. The 6th took six months and finished days before we had the CTC practical’s. If you can, have the senior staff complete the CTC as a team so everyone sees and hears the same things and can then have the necessary discussions to mold the Blue Card to the local needs. If you have to travel to the CTC this might be just as cost effective. Get your

command staff and union on board. It is a great program, and great review for seasoned response chiefs (Survey Monkey, 2012).

The second area of advice was related to target audience. While South Metro has budgeted for all officers and acting officers to complete the program, there are a number of comments that indicate that some level of training is required by all members within the department. The comments included:

> It is critical for all officers to complete the program. It is advisable to have all personnel complete at least the on-line portion. It is critical to involve your dispatchers as players in the simulation training. Have frequent discussions with your personnel as you work through the online sessions (monthly?) to help answer and provide direction on the content. Think about the time commitment of this program. For career firefighters / fire officers, I think they will finish the course, but I have some concerns that volunteers will get started and give up part way through it. Older people that don't like computers probably will struggle with this type of training also. Invest the time to train all of your department in the terminology. Make it available to EVERYONE! - not a "select few" (i.e. just current officers). Blue Card enhances many aspects of fire ground command, but it does not teach SA or the necessary components to understanding rapid tactical decision making. It is tough to enforce the online but the comments from all officers is that this is the best training they have received I would recommend adopting Blue Card. Start at the regional Chief Officer level. It's a remarkably useful program. Expect a wide range of response from employees ranging from complete acceptance to passive aggressive behavior. We have found that once personnel have been through the training; they have

developed an appreciation for the system. Include dispatchers in the training too (Survey Monkey, 2012).

Not surprising was the commentary related to SOPs. It seems that most departments who responded have either experienced the need to change SOPs or to adopt the Blue Card curriculum to their existing procedures. Concerns from the respondents included:

Make the Blue Card program the "South Metro Blue Card", there are ways to adopt the program and make minor adjustments to fit your agency. Take it slow and adapt system to local needs. The main thing is you have to make it work for you, Phoenix FD has their own dispatch which helps tremendously as they will be working with the commanders. If you don't have the same setup it changes the operation. Training -good program, work on customizing it. Don't adopt the program without teaching situational awareness and rapid tactical decision making. The program is good, but I believe it can be reinforced. Also, due to the fact that the program began in Phoenix and is linked with Indiana, it certainly lacks the necessary components related to wildfire. Departments that respond to wildland fires must recognize this and make the necessary modifications. Also, Blue Card is an IC training and certification program. It is nothing without SOPs, GOGs, SOGs or whatever you call them. The two sides must be directly connected. That was something that I would have changed with the implementation of BC in my department. I would recommend that the SOGs match the program prior to full implementation. It has provided our department the ability to communicate better on the fire ground and has given our incident commanders the ability to make better decisions through the simulation process. It's a great program to get everyone on the same page and with a little

tweaking for your own department can fit very well. The full version does not allow a 100 percent fit into every F.D. Sometimes you have to add your own elements into the program. For example, all of the sims were for homes without basements. In the Midwest we have basements and they saw that need and made more sims. Write Fireground polices to incorporate Blue Card but utilize pre-determined assignments for first two Engines and first two Ladders / Special Service. Our 1 Alarm card is 4 Engines and 2 Ladders (Survey Monkey, 2012).

While a major concern of the author's is the potential effects on SMFRA's mutual aid partners, only a few comments were noted, although all were encouraging, of involving other departments. One query in their questionnaire asked about regional efforts regarding the Blue Card. Only 8.5% indicated that all of their mutual and automatic aid partners had adopted the program while 61% indicated that some had. Seemingly these numbers could be indicative that many areas have not achieved the regionalization yet.

12. Who in your area has adopted the Blue Card program? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
No one	27.1%	16
Some of our mutual or automatic aid partners	**61.0%**	**36**
All of our mutual or automatic aid partners	8.5%	5
It is regional here, most everyone has been through the program	6.8%	4
	Comments Show Responses	11
	AnsweredQuestion	59
	SkippedQuestion	1

Comments related to regionalization were:

> Consider training with officer staff of mutual aid department(s). If you rely on area departments in daily operations, work with them ahead of time. Generally they can easily fall into the jargon and follow the process. Must be used by everyone, helps if your neighbors or whoever you respond with is using it too. You and your mutual aid partners should do it together so you can be on the same page (Survey Monkey, 2012).

Several comments on advice were related to costs and potential funding sources. They include:

> Look for grants to help cover the costs; define your needs up front, be certain you have the technology and personnel to support same. From beginning to end it will have taken us approximately 2 years to fully convert to the program. There is a huge amount of time involved to make this system work on all levels of the department. It is well worth the investment in time and money and it is a very good training program for new command officers. The entire package has let my training staff focus on other issues in the dept. This is a great program it is cheap learning when you consider the alternative. Consider approaching your 911 authority to pay for the initial and ongoing training, Jefferson County paid for ours. The program is well worth the investment in your personnel. DO IT - the cost may scare some away, but no one has ever been turned down for an AFG blue card grant - find a way to fund it and DO IT - everyone will benefit (Survey Monkey, 2012).

The last group of advice from Blue Card users was reflective of a need for continuing education. Again this number seemed smaller than anticipated but may be related to the newness of the program for most departments. The comments included:

> Spend time afterwards on refreshers and continuing education. We do not accept failure and continue to remediate those that seem to have problems with fluency and application of the system. Just realize that it must be supported from the top down and across all levels within the organization (Survey Monkey, 2012).

The Blue Card program has been successfully implemented in several places. Input received from departments who have already been successful yielded a number of important themes that were reflected in the recommendation section. Among these are the importance of having all officers participate and to start with the highest ranking officers first. Leaders must demonstrate their commitment to the program. As pointed out in the NFA's Executive Development course, "people will support change if they think it is good and necessary" (*Executive Development*, 2011, p. 5-10). The importance of communicating the goals of the programs and the vision of the department in implementing the program must be passed on to all members through introductory classes, written SOP's, and ongoing interactions.

Discussion

The results of this research yielded a number of significant findings regarding implementation. While not a goal of the project it also confirmed that the program was in fact helpful to departments looking to solve issues related to consistent communications and command. Some also cited the benefits of regional approaches to adoption. A number of themes that are worth noting arose from the research.

First is the importance of having buy in from the top as well as selecting instructors who not only teach but also are themselves incident commanders. This street credibility adds validity to the program as the students learn from those respected as "walking the talk." Many users of the system mirrored the thoughts of John Brunacini who spoke of the importance of support from the top. "When the chief of department has bought in and a group of energetic end users have bought in there is no stopping the momentum"(J. Brunacini, personal communication, December 6, 2012). The sentiment was echoed by Nick Brunacini who claimed, "if the Fire Chief is an advocate of the program, he can buy the revolutionaries enough time to roll it out." Brunacini went on to elucidate that, "my experience is the workforce grabs a hold of it and makes it their own" (N. Brunacini, personal communication, November 12, 2012).

Some Blue Card users mentioned the importance of getting union buy in, and this was cited as an issue in Phoenix after Alan Brunacini retired (Fenske, 2007). Involving everyone in such a large undertaking is always important. From the comments received through interviews and questionnaires, a top down approach that occurs concurrently with getting attention from those motivated hard chargers in the ranks might yield the highest chance for success. Brian

Kimberley says, “if your firefighters appreciate the value of simulation training, the benefits will increase dramatically (Kimberley, 2010, p. 4).

Next, inconsistencies with current SOPs must be rectified before full implementation. SOPs serve as the training manual of sorts as the way a department does business, and it must congruently match the training program. Many respondents indicated that ideally these SOPs are adopted regionally to minimize differences in mutual aid scenarios. Cook points out, “it is desirable to get as many fingerprints on the proposed SOP as possible” (Cook, 1998, p. 6). The Blue Card’s written SOP manual adds, “effective incident communications focus on completing the tactical priorities (within the parameters of the critical incident factors and firefighter safety). This approach requires a simple, standard communications game plan (SOP) for the entire organization” (Brunacini, 2012, p. 42).

The target audience of the program was identified as all officers and future officers by most who responded. That said, there was a significant number who felt the need to train all members in some or the entire curriculum. In Brevard County all line firefighters and support staff complete the first-responder module to ensure a basic understanding of the system (Collins, 2012,). Several people spoke of the potential benefits of incorporating dispatchers into the process. In some cases this was as students and in others it revolved around having actual dispatchers assist in the delivery of simulations. This concept is part of the Phoenix program ("Phoenix CTC," n.d.).

Beyond the membership of South Metro and its dispatchers, many users of the Blue Card system indicated that a regional approach is valuable and should be pursued. As a matter of common practice, a South Metro battalion chief responds when a South Metro engine responds out of district to working fires. Many of the mutual aid districts do the same when the fire occurs

inside of South Metro. Increasing the number of command officers who understand the same terminology and ICS set up would offer a greater cooperation and likely reduce the gaps in communication that the mutual aid partners cited in their questionnaire. The curriculum suggests the need to deploy "5 Response Chiefs, Safety Officers, Training personnel, or Staff Officers" on the scene of first alarm working incidents (Brunacini, 2012, p. 4). Having more qualified personnel trained in the system from around the region will speed the availability of such officers.

The construction of a CTC is one area that some departments do themselves while others use regional centers. According to the Blue Card program a center can be built for approximately 15,000 dollars provided space already exists. The cost can be much higher though when space is unavailable and a structure must be built. Houston for example completed a new 10,000 square foot stand-alone building in 2009 for its simulation training at a cost of 2.6 million dollars (Kimberley, 2010, p. 3).

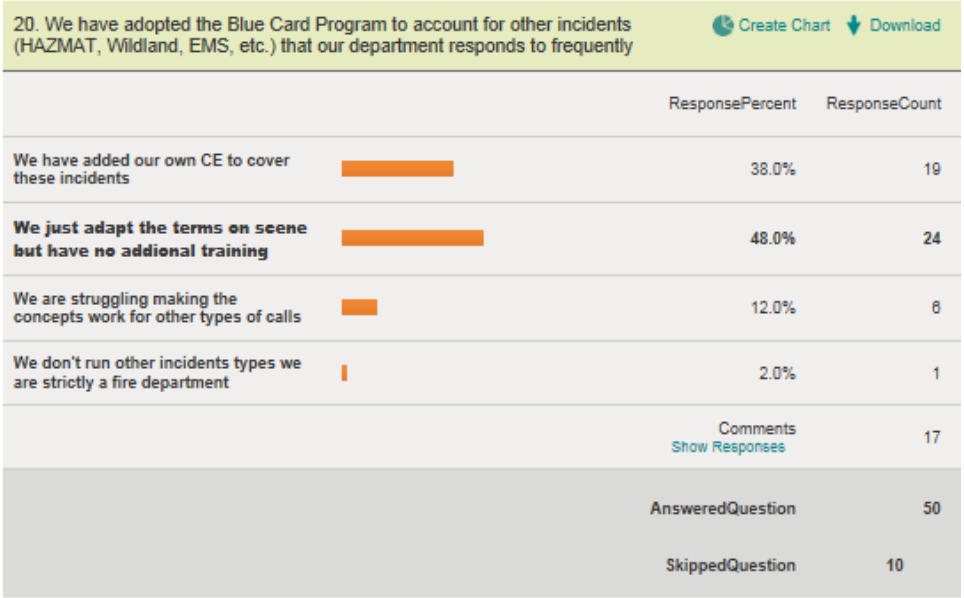
When departments open their centers up to outside agencies, they generally charge $350 per student to certify them in simulations (www.bshifter.com). The ability for a department to recoup some expenses by offering certification to other departments can be somewhat appealing. Obviously any CTC must have adequate space for the simulation lab as well as classroom space, control room, and command area mock ups. One suggestion by John Brunacini was to seriously look at tablet style computers rather than personal computers for each simulation station. He observed that many departments were beginning to make their CTC more of a mobile venture, and reducing the size of the hardware aided the portability of the program (J. Brunacini, personal communication, December 6, 2012).

The last discussion item is related to continuing education. Some respondents spoke about the importance of ongoing simulation training. Considering the inconsistency issue is related somewhat to a lack of recurrence of strategic level training, this topic has some merit. 53 % of the South Metro focus group identified that they felt that quarterly CE was best, with some saying it should be less frequent. This matches the Phoenix Fire Department program in frequency as well where each Captain runs simulations each quarter ("Phoenix CTC," n.d.).

8. How often do you think that you should get CE (new simulations) Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
N/A- one time is enough	0.0%	0
Monthly	5.3%	1
Quarterly	**52.6%**	**10**
Semi-annually	15.8%	3
Annually	26.3%	5
Bi-annual	0.0%	0
Comments Show Responses		3

Kimberley adds, “to be cost effective, the simulator cannot stand idle. A flexible simulator can train everyone from your new hires to your veteran chiefs. Explore other simulation scenarios to expand your target audience—e.g., ARFF, ship fires, and mass-casualty incidents” (Kimberley, 2010, p. 4). This was also reflected somewhat by the actions of the current users of the Blue Card, 38% of whom reported that they used continuing education to prepare for incidents other than structure fires. Brevard County Fire Rescue, a Blue Card user, provides “on-going command training based on internally-developed scenarios using local structures and common conditions while still applying the Blue Card Command concepts to the various situations encountered” (Collins, 2012, p. 23).



20. We have adopted the Blue Card Program to account for other incidents (HAZMAT, Wildland, EMS, etc.) that our department responds to frequently

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
We have added our own CE to cover these incidents	38.0%	19
We just adapt the terms on scene but have no addional training	48.0%	24
We are struggling making the concepts work for other types of calls	12.0%	6
We don't run other incidents types we are strictly a fire department	2.0%	1
Comments Show Responses		17
AnsweredQuestion		50
SkippedQuestion		10

Recommendations

South Metro Fire Rescue Authority had decided to implement the Blue Card Command Training curriculum for all officers and chiefs. The purpose of this ARP was to develop an implementation strategy for using the Blue Card program at South Metro. Using the knowledge gained from South Metro's own focus group as well as the experience of officers and trainers from other departments who have adopted the program, the author offers the following recommendations. A table outlining time frames and responsible parties for these recommendations can be found in Appendix A.

1) The Training Chief at South Metro will determine the possibility of partnerships with our mutual aid partners in adopting and utilizing the Blue Card program. A recurring theme from this research was that a regional approach was possible and should be pursued. Several other departments had been involved in a focus group, and many are beginning implementation themselves. By sharing resources such as facilities and instructors we can

assure that the program will maintain a cooperative focus between departments.

2) The Training Chief will identify and recruit potential instructors. This group will attend the Blue Card train-the-trainer program. Per recommendations received the group selected will be street credible and involved not only as instructors but practitioners. The instructors will develop a vision statement for the program and should include a list of supportive values when instructing the course.
3) South Metro's instructors, in concert with mutual aid departments identified above, will edit SMFRA SOGs to reflect the new curriculum and publish these SOGs to the entire department. Where possible all SOGs will be written and updated to reflect a regionalized approach. All SOGs should be published via SMFRA's online training system to allow for other agencies to access them.
4) The Training Chief will identify and select a CTC manager. That manager will coordinate the building of a South Metro Command Training Center. The CTC manager should be familiar with the curriculum and instructional methodology and also be well versed in the use of the computer technology required in the program. The CTC manager will manage the budget for building the center and look for grants and other cost avoidance or savings where possible. Group purchases of furniture, computers, software, and the like will be pursued if applicable and a cost savings is realized.

5) The SMFRA Blue Card training staff will introduce the program to all members through several introductory classes. As with all new programs, brief instruction in the new material over several sessions helps assure that members have an opportunity to grasp the material before being expected to use it on the fireground. Examples of the material the group will develop are a basic introduction to terminology, an introduction to the CTC, and a communications module for non-officers. Using the South Metro University platform, an online learning management system already in place, these classes should be accessible on demand where possible. Opening up this system to our mutual aid partners also provides the possibility of increased understanding on the fireground during the initial implementation phase when operating with our allies. For mutual aid departments who will not be adopting the program, the instructor group will develop introductory material to reduce confusion when they operate within South Metro's borders.
6) The training coordinator (assistant to the training chief) will sign up all officers and chiefs for on-line classes and schedule simulation portion. Working with the department's staffing chief, sign up will be done in blocks to minimize the time between conclusion of the online portion of the class and the start of the simulation portion.
7) Through the training bureau, the Blue Card instructors, and the incident safety officer group, an evaluation of fireground changes, continuing inconsistencies, and successes will be made. This evaluation will track compliance with the new curriculum with the purpose being to create a needs assessment for topics

for continuing education. A score card that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation is located in Appendix E

The Blue Card instructors will plan and develop a continuing education program at the conclusion of all officers and chiefs being certified. The instructors will consult with the training bureau staff and review their evaluations so that all continuing education addresses those areas identified as needing improvement. Additionally, investigation and collaboration with SMFRA's human resource bureau regarding any changes to the department’s various job descriptions should be also made. Finally, follow up questionnaires with internal officers and external mutual aid and automatic aid units should be conducted at the end of 2014 and beyond to assure that miscommunication and on scene effectiveness is moving in the correct direction.

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Appendix A

Implementation timetable

Start Date	Due Date	Item	Notes	Person Responsible
	October 1, 2012	Determine rough budget numbers	With 2013 as the projected implementation date, preliminary numbers are needed to fit the SMFRA budget process. Using $385 per member as the course fee and $15,000 as a CTC start up cost, 2013 Blue card costs= $53,500 before overtime. 5 instructor certifications times $4,000= $20,000	Training Chief
February 25, 2013	February 27, 2013	Certify Instructors	Train the trainer program available at Loveland, Colorado Fire Department	Training Chief to identify cadre
December 1, 2012	April 1, 2013	Locate partner agencies	Identify mutual aid partners who are willing to adopt the program with South Metro	Training Chief and Operations Chief

February 1, 2013	May 1, 2013	Build CTC	Assign CTC manager, review budget for equipment, locate grant money where possible, make site visits to other CTC locations. Determine space needs and select location. Investigate computer needs for project.	Training Chief to assign manager
April 1, 2013	July 1, 2013	Update SOP	Each operational SOP must reflect the new terminology and match Blue Card expectations and curriculum. Instructors will review the Blue Card Command SOP and adapt it to SMFRA policies as well as other departments' framework to create regionalized documents where possible.	Blue Card instructors/ mutual aid partners

May 1, 2013	July 1, 2013	Develop introductory classes	Planned “show and tell” visits to the CTC, introduction of new terms, online course for internal and external users developed and published	Blue Card instructors
July 1, 2013	December 1, 2013	Schedule online blocks and CTC classes	Each officer will be assigned to blocks based on projected vacation schedule for 2013. The goal will be to complete the initial 50 hour online and 24 hour simulations by December 2013.	Training coordinator/ staffing chief
September, 2013	October 1, 2013	Evaluate on scene performance	Incident safety officers (ISOs) and battalion chiefs to develop “score sheets” to determine continuing education needs	Training officers and Battalion Chiefs

October 1, 2013	November 1, 2013	Develop 2014 training plan	Based on evaluations by SMFRA ISOs and BCs, the Blue Card training cadre will develop a training schedule for 2014	Blue Card trainers
November 1, 2013	December 1, 2013	Plan and budget for 2014 continuing education	Based on evaluation of program, determine the frequency and topics for continuing education in 2014. Evaluate and develop methods for incorporating future Blue Card certification into all officer task books.	Training Chief

Appendix B

Questionnaire to mutual/automatic aid partners

(10 different fire departments, 56 respondents)

December 14, 2012- January 10, 2013

1. What fire department are you with?

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Aurora	10.7%	6
Castle Rock	8.9%	5
Cunningham	**33.9%**	**19**
Elizabeth	1.8%	1
Englewood	1.8%	1
Franktown	3.6%	2
Littleton	12.5%	7
Rattlesnake	0.0%	0
West Douglas	1.8%	1
West Metro	25.0%	14
AnsweredQuestion		56
SkippedQuestion		0

2. What is your rank or role at emeregency incidents?

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Administrative officer (Chief or officer who responds in a support role to incidents such as investigations, safety, or logistics	7.1%	4
Command officer (Chief who responds as an IC)	23.2%	13
Company officer (officer who rides on a suppression company and may act as an initial IC)	**69.6%**	**39**
Other Show Responses		14
AnsweredQuestion		56
SkippedQuestion		0

3. What is your highest level of NIMS/ICS training? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
100	10.7%	6
200	19.6%	11
300	23.2%	13
400	**60.7%**	**34**
N/A	0.0%	0
AnsweredQuestion		56
SkippedQuestion		0

4. Have you been through the Blue Card command training program? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Yes	8.9%	5
No	**91.1%**	**51**
If yes, what year? Show Responses		2
AnsweredQuestion		56
SkippedQuestion		0

5. How many years have you been in the fire service? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
less than 5	0.0%	0
5-9	7.1%	4
10-14	19.6%	11
15-19	16.1%	9
20-29	**33.9%**	**19**
Greater than 30	23.2%	13
AnsweredQuestion		56
SkippedQuestion		0

6. I am a _____ firefighter

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Volunteer	1.8%	1
Career	**98.2%**	**55**
	AnsweredQuestion	**56**
	SkippedQuestion	**0**

7. In the last 3 years, how many significant incidents (e.g. requiring "command" to be established) have you responded to with units from South Metro Fire Rescue Authority? (In your district or South Metro's)

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
None	1.8%	1
1-4	**37.5%**	**21**
5-9	21.4%	12
10-19	26.8%	15
20-49	10.7%	6
more than 50	1.8%	1
	AnsweredQuestion	**56**
	SkippedQuestion	**0**

8. At incidents that you have responded to with South Metro, what positives would you say about how the incident went? (Check any or all that apply)

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Cooperation between our agencies	**88.9%**	**48**
Communication between our agencies	44.4%	24
Tactical similarities between our agencies	59.3%	32
ICS similarities between our agencies	66.7%	36
Teamwork between our agencies	81.5%	44
Mutual respect between our agencies	79.6%	43
	Comments Show Responses	12
	AnsweredQuestion	**54**
	SkippedQuestion	**2**

9. At incidents that you have responded to with South Metro, what negatives would you say about how the incident went? (Check any or all that apply) Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Cooperation between our agencies	1.8%	1
Communication between our agencies	**49.1%**	**27**
Tactical similarities between our agencies	16.4%	9
ICS similarities between our agencies	10.9%	6
Teamwork between our agencies	7.3%	4
Mutual respect between our agencies	14.5%	8
	Comments Show Responses	26
	AnsweredQuestion	55
	SkippedQuestion	1

10. Based on your responses to the negatives listed above, what do you feel would be the best solutions to assuring that in the future incidents run better? (Check all that apply) Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Regularly scheduled meetings between our chiefs	41.8%	23
Adoption of regionalized SOPs	47.3%	26
Company level hands on mutual aid training	**63.6%**	**35**
Regionalized command training (scenarios)	52.7%	29
Off duty social events	21.8%	12
On duty social events	25.5%	14
Regionalized training events (symposiums or lectures)	45.5%	25
	Comments Show Responses	20
	AnsweredQuestion	55
	SkippedQuestion	1

11. If you answered that regionalized command training would improve operations, how often should we train together

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Quarterly	**40.0%**	**20**
Bi-annually	34.0%	17
Annually	4.0%	2
Semi-annually	8.0%	4
I don't think that it would improve anything	14.0%	7
	Comments Show Responses	6
	AnsweredQuestion	**50**
	SkippedQuestion	**6**

12. What training do your officers receive regarding command and strategy and tactics? (check all that apply)

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
None	4.0%	2
NIMS/ICS	**86.0%**	**43**
In house officer academy	48.0%	24
Blue Card	16.0%	8
Regional and National conferences	46.0%	23
Our own command training simulations	60.0%	30
	Other (please specify) Show Responses	7
	AnsweredQuestion	**50**
	SkippedQuestion	**6**

13. How well are your officers trained, in your opinion, to command a second alarm working fire? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Extremely well	8.0%	4
Very well	26.0%	13
Moderately well	38.0%	19
Slightly well	24.0%	12
Not at all well	4.0%	2
AnsweredQuestion		50
SkippedQuestion		6

14. What other comments do you have regarding command training or interoperability between your department and South Metro? Download

	ResponseCount
Show Responses	50
AnsweredQuestion	50
SkippedQuestion	6

Appendix C

Questionnaire to South Metro Fire Rescue Authority Blue Card Focus Group

(Battalion chiefs, training officers, company officers, and an acting officer 20 out of 21 responses)

August 29, 2012- October 1, 2012

1. My rank is		Create Chart	Download
		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Battalion Chief or above		60.0%	12
Captain		15.0%	3
Lieutenant		20.0%	4
Acting Lieutenant		5.0%	1
		AnsweredQuestion	20
		SkippedQuestion	0

2. I have been in the fire service for _____years		Create Chart	Download
		ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Less than 10		0.0%	0
10-14		10.0%	2
15-19		5.0%	1
20-29		40.0%	8
30 or more		45.0%	9
		AnsweredQuestion	20
		SkippedQuestion	0

3. I have been in my current rank for _____years

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Less than 4	5.0%	1
5-9	**40.0%**	**8**
10-14	30.0%	6
Greater than 15	25.0%	5
	AnsweredQuestion	**20**
	SkippedQuestion	**0**

4. What area do you feel you need the most training in? (Check all that apply)

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Basic Tactics (Pulling hose, throwing ladders)	0.0%	0
Command Strategy	**75.0%**	**15**
Safety (Being the safety officer)	5.0%	1
Division/group supervisor (being in this role)	45.0%	9
Large scale (multiple operational periods) incidents	65.0%	13
First and second alarm fires	40.0%	8
Fires in target hazards	50.0%	10
Communications	40.0%	8
	AnsweredQuestion	**20**

5. How would you describe your progress on the Blue Card program?	Create Chart	Download
	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Just started the on-line stuff	0.0%	0
Completed the on-line portion but haven't been to the simulations yet	16.7%	3
Have completed the program more than 6 months ago	11.1%	2
Have completed the program within the past 6 months	**72.2%**	**13**
	Comments Show Responses	3
	AnsweredQuestion	18
	SkippedQuestion	2

6. How well does The Blue Card meet its objectives?	Create Chart	Download
	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Extremely well	26.3%	5
Very well	**63.2%**	**12**
Moderately well	5.3%	1
Slightly well	5.3%	1
Not at all well	0.0%	0
	Comments Show Responses	4
	AnsweredQuestion	19
	SkippedQuestion	1

7. As a result of using the Blue Card would you say you — Create Chart | Download

	Not at all	Very little	Neutral	In most cases	Absolutely	RatingAverage	RatingCount
communicate better	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	5.3% (1)	**57.9% (11)**	36.8% (7)	4.32	19
are safer	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	26.3% (5)	**47.4% (9)**	26.3% (5)	4.00	19
have better teamwork on your calls	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	15.8% (3)	**63.2% (12)**	21.1% (4)	4.05	19
have better accountability	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	21.1% (4)	31.6% (6)	**47.4% (9)**	4.26	19
are more effective	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	5.3% (1)	**52.6% (10)**	42.1% (8)	4.37	19
work better with the neighbors	0.0% (0)	5.3% (1)	**52.6% (10)**	42.1% (8)	0.0% (0)	3.37	19
understand expectations better	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	15.8% (3)	**52.6% (10)**	31.6% (6)	4.16	19
have more trust from the troops	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	**47.4% (9)**	42.1% (8)	10.5% (2)	3.63	19
						Comments Show Responses	2
						AnsweredQuestion	**19**
						SkippedQuestion	**1**

8. How often do you think that you should get CE (new simulations) — Create Chart | Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
N/A- one time is enough	0.0%	0
Monthly	5.3%	1
Quarterly	**52.6%**	**10**
Semi-annually	15.8%	3
Annually	26.3%	5
Bi-annual	0.0%	0
	Comments Show Responses	3
	AnsweredQuestion	**19**
	SkippedQuestion	**1**

9. What are the reasons we should consider using the Blue Card? (I.E what would it fix?)	Download
	ResponseCount
Show Responses	18
AnsweredQuestion	18
SkippedQuestion	2

10. What is the greatest benefit to the program?	Download
	ResponseCount
Show Responses	18
AnsweredQuestion	18
SkippedQuestion	2

11. What is the greatest drawback to the program?	Download
	ResponseCount
Show Responses	18
AnsweredQuestion	18
SkippedQuestion	2

12. What challenges would you anticipate if we adopt Blue Card? (Check all that apply) Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
New/updated SOGs	80.0%	12
New terminology	**86.7%**	**13**
More consistent incident command	66.7%	10
Better communications	73.3%	11
Safer firegrounds	60.0%	9
Confusion when operating with other agencies	66.7%	10
Better cooperation when working with neighbors	40.0%	6
More "continuing education" for officers in regards to strategy and tactics	**86.7%**	**13**
	Other (please specify) Show Responses	6
	AnsweredQuestion	15
	SkippedQuestion	5

13. Would you say our department should Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Adopt the program in full	44.4%	8
Adopt the program in part	**50.0%**	**9**
Should continue in a trial stage	0.0%	0
Not pursue it	5.6%	1
	Comments Show Responses	10
	AnsweredQuestion	18
	SkippedQuestion	2

14. Any other comments Download

	ResponseCount
Show Responses	18
AnsweredQuestion	18
SkippedQuestion	2

Appendix D

Questionnaire to departments currently using the Blue Card program

59 respondents

August 23, 2012- October 1, 2012

1. In what state is your fire department located? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Alabama	0.0%	0
Alaska	0.0%	0
Arizona	0.0%	0
Arkansas	1.7%	1
California	3.4%	2
Colorado	**16.9%**	**10**
Connecticut	0.0%	0
Delaware	0.0%	0
District of Columbia (DC)	0.0%	0
Florida	6.8%	4
Georgia	0.0%	0
Hawaii	0.0%	0
Idaho	1.7%	1
Illinois	**16.9%**	**10**
Indiana	**16.9%**	**10**
Iowa	1.7%	1
Kansas	0.0%	0
Kentucky	0.0%	0
Louisiana	1.7%	1
Maine	0.0%	0
Maryland	0.0%	0
Massachusetts	0.0%	0
Michigan	3.4%	2
Minnesota	5.1%	3
Mississippi	0.0%	0
Missouri	0.0%	0
Montana	0.0%	0

Nebraska	0.0%	0
Nevada	0.0%	0
New Hampshire	0.0%	0
New Jersey	1.7%	1
New Mexico	0.0%	0
New York	0.0%	0
North Carolina	0.0%	0
North Dakota	0.0%	0
Ohio	**16.9%**	**10**
Oklahoma	0.0%	0
Oregon	0.0%	0
Pennsylvania	0.0%	0
Puerto Rico	0.0%	0
Rhode Island	0.0%	0
South Carolina	0.0%	0
South Dakota	0.0%	0
Tennessee	0.0%	0
Texas	0.0%	0
Utah	0.0%	0
Vermont	0.0%	0
Virginia	0.0%	0
Washington	3.4%	2
West Virginia	0.0%	0
Wisconsin	1.7%	1
Wyoming	0.0%	0
	AnsweredQuestion	59
	SkippedQuestion	1

2. What is the population your department serves? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Less than 25,000	**30.0%**	**18**
25,000-50,000	26.7%	16
50,000-100,000	21.7%	13
100,000-250,000	8.3%	5
250,000-500,000	8.3%	5
Greater than 500,000	5.0%	3
	Comments Show Responses	4
	AnsweredQuestion	**60**
	SkippedQuestion	**0**

3. What types of demographics are covered by your department (Check all that apply) Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Rural	43.3%	26
Wildland Urban Interface	38.3%	23
Suburban	**93.3%**	**56**
Urban	35.0%	21
Major Highways	76.7%	46
Airports	23.3%	14
Railroads	60.0%	36
	Other (please specify) Show Responses	6
	AnsweredQuestion	**60**
	SkippedQuestion	**0**

4. How many fire stations are in your department?

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
1-4	**60.0%**	**36**
5-9	25.0%	15
10-14	0.0%	0
15-19	5.0%	3
20-29	3.3%	2
Greater than 30	6.7%	4
	AnsweredQuestion	**60**
	SkippedQuestion	**0**

5. My department is

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Volunteer	3.3%	2
Combination (mostly volunteer)	18.3%	11
Combination (mostly career)	36.7%	22
Career	**41.7%**	**25**
	Other (please specify) Show Responses	3
	AnsweredQuestion	**60**
	SkippedQuestion	**0**

6. How many suppression personnel are in your department? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
less than 25	3.3%	2
25-49	30.0%	18
50-99	**36.7%**	**22**
100-199	15.0%	9
200-349	5.0%	3
350-499	1.7%	1
More than 500	8.3%	5
	Comments Show Responses	2
	AnsweredQuestion	60
	SkippedQuestion	0

7. How many on duty battalion chiefs (or like rank or function) are on duty each shift? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
None	8.3%	5
We are volunteer and don't have a set number	6.7%	4
1	**56.7%**	**34**
2-4	20.0%	12
5-8	8.3%	5
9 or more	0.0%	0
	Comments Show Responses	6
	AnsweredQuestion	60
	SkippedQuestion	0

8. What was your 2011 total call volume? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Less than 500	5.0%	3
500-2499	28.3%	17
2500-4999	**35.0%**	**21**
5000-9999	15.0%	9
10,000-19,000	6.7%	4
20,000-49,900	3.3%	2
Greater than 50,000	6.7%	4
	Comments Show Responses	2
	AnsweredQuestion	60
	SkippedQuestion	0

9. How many working structure fires did your department respond to in 2011? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Less than 10	16.7%	10
10-30	**35.0%**	**21**
31-75	25.0%	15
76-150	8.3%	5
150-350	5.0%	3
350-600	5.0%	3
Greater than 600	5.0%	3
	Comments Show Responses	1
	AnsweredQuestion	60
	SkippedQuestion	0

10. How many members (approximately) have completed the Blue Card On-line class? (Check all that apply) Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
None	5.2%	3
A couple (as a trial or on their own)	10.3%	6
Several officers from various ranks	22.4%	13
All Training Staff	27.6%	16
All Command (Chief) level officers	51.7%	30
All Company Officers	**53.4%**	**31**
Most every member of the department	6.9%	4
	Comments Show Responses	23
	AnsweredQuestion	58
	SkippedQuestion	2

11. Would you say your department has Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Adopted the program in full	**42.4%**	**25**
Adopted the program in part	28.8%	17
is still in the trial stage	25.4%	15
has tried it and decided not to pursue it	3.4%	2
	Comments Show Responses	12
	AnsweredQuestion	59
	SkippedQuestion	1

12. Who in your area has adopted the Blue Card program? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
No one	27.1%	16
Some of our mutual or automatic aid partners	**61.0%**	**36**
All of our mutual or automatic aid partners	8.5%	5
It is regional here, most everyone has been through the program	6.8%	4
	Comments Show Responses	11
	AnsweredQuestion	59
	SkippedQuestion	1

13. How long has your department been using Blue Card? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Less than 6 months	24.0%	12
6 months to one year	22.0%	11
1-2 years	**34.0%**	**17**
Greater than 2 years	20.0%	10
	Comments Show Responses	5
	AnsweredQuestion	50
	SkippedQuestion	10

14. What were the reasons the department considered the Blue Card? (I.E what were you trying to fix?) Download

	ResponseCount
Show Responses	50
AnsweredQuestion	50
SkippedQuestion	10

15. How well does The Blue Card meet its objectives? Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Extremely well	**54.0%**	**27**
Very well	42.0%	21
Moderately well	4.0%	2
Slightly well	0.0%	0
Not at all well	0.0%	0
	Comments Show Responses	13
	AnsweredQuestion	**50**
	SkippedQuestion	**10**

16. As a result of using the Blue Card would you say your department Create Chart Download

	Not at all	Very little	Neutral	In most cases	Absolutely	RatingAverage	RatingCount
communicates better	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	10.2% (5)	**44.9% (22)**	**44.9% (22)**	4.35	49
is safer	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	14.3% (7)	**44.9% (22)**	40.8% (20)	4.27	49
has better teamwork	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	24.5% (12)	**46.9% (23)**	28.6% (14)	4.04	49
has better accountability	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	12.2% (6)	**53.1% (26)**	34.7% (17)	4.22	49
is more effective	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	10.2% (5)	**53.1% (26)**	36.7% (18)	4.27	49
works better with the neighbors	0.0% (0)	4.1% (2)	24.5% (12)	**57.1% (28)**	14.3% (7)	3.82	49
understands expectations better	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	12.5% (6)	**47.9% (23)**	39.6% (19)	4.27	48
has more trust internally	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	**40.8% (20)**	32.7% (16)	26.5% (13)	3.86	49
						Comments Show Responses	12
						AnsweredQuestion	**49**
						SkippedQuestion	**11**

17. what is the greatest benefit to the program?	Download
	ResponseCount
Show Responses	50
AnsweredQuestion	50
SkippedQuestion	10

18. What is the greatest drawback to the program?	Download
	ResponseCount
Show Responses	50
AnsweredQuestion	50
SkippedQuestion	10

19. What changes has your department adopted or faced because of Blue Card? (Check all that apply) Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
New/updated SOGs	82.0%	41
New terminology	86.0%	43
More consistent incident command	88.0%	44
Better communications	74.0%	37
Safer firegrounds	76.0%	38
Confusion when operating with other agencies	16.0%	8
Better cooperation when working with neighbors	42.0%	21
More "continuing education" for officers in regards to strategy and tactics	80.0%	40
Other (please specify) Show Responses		12
AnsweredQuestion		50
SkippedQuestion		10

20. We have adopted the Blue Card Program to account for other incidents (HAZMAT, Wildland, EMS, etc.) that our department responds to frequently

Create Chart Download

	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
We have added our own CE to cover these incidents	38.0%	19
We just adapt the terms on scene but have no addional training	**48.0%**	**24**
We are struggling making the concepts work for other types of calls	12.0%	6
We don't run other incidents types we are strictly a fire department	2.0%	1
	Comments Show Responses	17
	AnsweredQuestion	50
	SkippedQuestion	10

21. Knowing what you know now, what advice would you offer to departments that are considering the adoption of the Blue Card?

Download

	ResponseCount
Show Responses	50
AnsweredQuestion	50
SkippedQuestion	10

Appendix E

Implementation Evaluation Score Card

This form will be used by the Incident Commander or Incident Safety Officer following each incident with a response of more than 3 units.

Date	Incident Number		Shift
IC	Initial IC		Incident type
1) Were all SOPs followed?		Yes	No
Comments			
2) What Blue Card concepts were needed at this incident? (list)			
Comments			
3) How could this incident have been improved?			
4) What lessons could be shared with other members at SMFRA from this response?			

5) Is there a need for a formal AAR of this response?	Yes	No
6) Any other comments?		
Completed by		

Please forward this form electronically to the BLUECARD@southmetro.org e-mail alias.